

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the Senate amendment to H.R. 915.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MCCAUL. Mr. Speaker, just on a point of personal privilege, Mr. CUELLAR and I will be embarking at the end of this week to head down to Mexico City to the President of Mexico's inauguration. I agree with my colleague that our relationship with Mexico is vitally important and the idea that the BEST teams, Border Enforcement Security Teams, have provided an invaluable service on the border. In terms of confiscating cash and weapons going south into Mexico, they have been extremely successful; and if anything merits additional resources, it's this program. I can't think of a better program to name after Jaime Zapata.

I will also say that on the several occasions that I have met with Agent Avila and his family, it has been very emotional to see someone who has come back almost from an operation of war, if you will, who has been shot at by the Los Zeta cartel members, almost going through a PTSD-type situation, a very, very emotional experience; and I wish Agent Avila and his family the best in their recovery. He is a very brave, brave man and soldier. And also to the family of Jaime Zapata, we honor you today with this bill and please know that you are always in our thoughts and in our prayers.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, today I am supporting H.R. 915, the Jaime Zapata Border Enforcement Security Task Force Act. This measure would establish Border Enforcement Security Task Force (BEST) teams within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to facilitate "collaboration among federal, state, local, tribal, and foreign law enforcement agencies to execute coordinated activities in furtherance of border security, and homeland security" and enhance information sharing among the agencies.

This mission is a very important one. And I encourage DHS to consult with local and state law enforcement on how these teams could best be used to fill gaps in border security.

I am particularly concerned about a proposal to close several interior border patrol stations. As an example, from 2007 through 2011 Border Patrol agents assigned to the Amarillo station made from 383 to 745 apprehensions per year. Despite this volume, the Border Patrol proposed closing its Amarillo station—along with eight other interior stations, six of them in Texas. The absence of the Amarillo interior Border Patrol station would leave no federal agency for hundreds of miles to take custody of illegal aliens or to assist local law enforcement with investigations.

I do not know whether the BEST teams authorized in this measure could fulfill the responsibilities of the border patrol stations that are proposed for closure. But I strongly recommend that DHS continue to examine ways to ensure that this vital federal responsibility is fulfilled.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by

the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MCCAUL) that the House suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendment to the bill, H.R. 915.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. MCCAUL. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

MEDICAL PREPAREDNESS ALLOWABLE USE ACT

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5997) to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to codify authority under existing grant guidance authorizing use of Urban Area Security Initiative and State Homeland Security Grant Program funding for enhancing medical preparedness, medical surge capacity, and mass prophylaxis capabilities, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5997

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Medical Preparedness Allowable Use Act".

SEC. 2. USE OF CERTAIN HOMELAND SECURITY GRANT FUNDS FOR ENHANCING MEDICAL PREPAREDNESS, MEDICAL SURGE CAPACITY, AND MASS PRO- PHYLAXIS CAPABILITIES.

Section 2008 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 609) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by redesignating paragraphs (10) through (13) as paragraphs (11) through (14), respectively, and by inserting after paragraph (9) the following:

“(10) enhancing medical preparedness, medical surge capacity, and mass prophylaxis capabilities, including the development and maintenance of an initial pharmaceutical stockpile, including medical kits, and diagnostics sufficient to protect first responders, their families, and immediate victims from a chemical or biological event;”; and

(2) in subsection (b)(3)(B), by striking “(a)(10)” and inserting “(a)(11)”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) and the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. THOMPSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support H.R. 5997, the Medical Preparedness Allowable Use Act, a bipartisan bill which amends the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to make it clear that grant funds under the State Homeland Security Grant Program and the Urban Area Security Initiative may be used to enhance medical preparedness and purchase medical countermeasures.

I introduced H.R. 5997 after a series of hearings on medical countermeasures in the Committee on Homeland Security's Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications. At these hearings, we received testimony from representatives of the emergency response community on the importance of stockpiling medical countermeasures in the event of a WMD attack. This includes pre-deployed medical kits for first responders and their families, similar to those provided to postal workers participating in the national U.S. Postal Medical Countermeasures Dispensing Pilot Program.

The grant guidance for the State Homeland Security Grant Program and the Urban Area Security Initiative currently permits this funding to be used to procure medical countermeasures and for other medical preparedness and medical surge capacity equipment and activities. However, this guidance is developed on an annual basis, and there is no guarantee that these uses will be authorized in the future.

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To be clear, this bill does not create a new grant program or authorize new funding. It simply ensures that these activities will remain allowable uses under SHSGP and UASI.

As the WMD Commission noted in its report, Mr. Speaker, "World at Risk," it is more likely than not that there will be a weapon of mass destruction used someplace on Earth by a terrorist group before the end of the year 2013, and it's more likely that this weapon will be biological, rather than nuclear.

The expenditures authorized and codified by the bill we are considering today can make a difference in the protection of the public, including emergency responders, in the event of such an attack, and there should be no doubt that grant funding may be used to support them now and in the future.

As the chairman of the Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response and Communications, I consistently find myself in awe of our first responders and the sacrifices that they make on behalf of our public. In the wake of events such as Hurricane Sandy, I am committed to ensuring Congress does all that it can to support those brave men and women, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased that this legislation is supported by the Emergency Services Coalition on Medical Preparedness, which works to ensure that we protect the protectors.

I reserve the balance of my time.

EMERGENCY SERVICES COALITION
FOR MEDICAL PREPAREDNESS,
Falls Church, VA, November 19, 2012.

Hon. GUS BILIRAKIS,
Chairman, Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications,
Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN BILIRAKIS: The Emergency Services Coalition for Medical Preparedness is pleased to support H.R. 5997 and the proposed amendment of the Homeland Security Act of 2002. The need for home and workplaces of medical caches to protect the emergency services providers in the nation remains high. Recent reports for the congressionally-chartered WMD Commission emphasize the continuing threat posed by biological weapons. Ensuring a resilient emergency services sector is an imperative for a superior response, a major part of this planning is the provision of Medkits pre-event to these professionals.

Emergency services professionals have unique roles, and are expected to serve and protect even in dangerous circumstances. Having responsible pre-event protections in place is necessary to ensure they can carry out this role. Individual physician-based prescription efforts have provided protection to hundreds of postal employees and federal employees, but not the millions of protectors and their families. Your bill addresses this gap.

We look forward to working with you and your staff in the passage of the Bill. Thank you for your leadership and continuing support in "protecting the protectors."

Sincerely,

TIM STEPHENS,
Advisor.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 5997, the Medical Preparedness Allowable Use Act, and yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, although I support H.R. 5997, it is not without reservation and concern about the reduced funding this Congress has allocated to important Homeland Security Grant Programs over the past few years. Due to significantly diminished appropriations for the Homeland Security Grant Program, important targeted grant programs such as the Metropolitan Medical Response System were consolidated into larger umbrella grant programs, such as the Urban Area Security Initiative and the State Homeland Security Grant Program in FY 2012.

I'm concerned that Congress' failure to specify a funding allocation for the Metropolitan Medical Response System sends the message that medical preparedness is no longer a priority.

H.R. 5997 authorizes the use of funding awarded under the Urban Area Security Initiative and the State Homeland Security Grant Program to enhance medical preparedness, medical surge capacity, and mass distribution of medical countermeasures. All of these activities would have been eligible under H.R. 1411, the Metropolitan Medical Response Systems Program Act of 2011.

H.R. 1411, which would have authorized the Metropolitan Medical Response System, was introduced by Representative BILIRAKIS and was marked up by the Subcommittee on Emergency

Preparedness, Response and Communications last year. I would rather be standing here today in support of H.R. 1411, which would send a clear message that medical preparedness is a priority for this Congress.

That said, I will support H.R. 5997 because I understand that grant resources are limited and that State and local governments must have the flexibility to utilize the scarce resources available to improve medical preparedness.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I have no other speakers. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, despite my reservations regarding this measure, I encourage my colleagues to support H.R. 5997, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Ranking Member, we'll continue to work on getting that bill passed. I promise you. That's my bill, and we worked very hard. As you said, it was marked up in committee, and we'll continue to advocate on behalf, of course, of the MMRS grant program.

Mr. Speaker, I once again urge Members to support this very important bill that ensures medical preparedness activities remain an allowable use under Homeland Security Grant Programs.

I yield back the balance of my time. The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5997, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

CLOTHE A HOMELESS HERO ACT

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6328) to amend title 49, United States Code, to direct the Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security (Transportation Security Administration) to transfer unclaimed clothing recovered at airport security checkpoints to local veterans organizations and other local charitable organizations, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6328

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Clothe a Homeless Hero Act".

SEC. 2. DISPOSITION OF UNCLAIMED CLOTHING RECOVERED AT AIRPORT SECURITY CHECKPOINTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 44945 of title 49, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in the section heading, by inserting "and clothing" after "money";

(2) by inserting before the text the following: "(a) DISPOSITION OF UNCLAIMED MONEY.—"; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

"(b) DISPOSITION OF UNCLAIMED CLOTHING.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—In disposing of unclaimed clothing recovered at any airport security checkpoint, the Assistant Secretary shall make every reasonable effort, in consultation with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, to transfer the clothing to local veterans organizations or other local charitable organizations for distribution to homeless or needy veterans and veteran families.

"(2) AGREEMENTS.—In implementing paragraph (1), the Assistant Secretary may enter into agreements with airport authorities.

"(3) OTHER CHARITABLE ARRANGEMENTS.—Nothing in this subsection shall prevent an airport or the Transportation Security Administration from donating unclaimed clothing to a charitable organization of their choosing.

"(4) LIMITATION.—Nothing in this subsection shall create a cost to the Government."

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 449 of such title is amended by striking the item relating to such section and inserting the following:

"44945. Disposition of unclaimed money and clothing."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) and the gentleman from New York (Ms. HOCHUL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include any extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, as vice chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee and a senior member of the Committee on Homeland Security, I rise in support of H.R. 6328, again, a bipartisan bill, a bill sponsored by my colleague, Ms. HOCHUL, the Clothe a Homeless Hero Act.

According to estimates from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, in 2011 approximately 14 percent of all homeless adults were veterans, with more than 67,000 veterans homeless on any given night—unacceptable.

We must do all that we can to ensure that the veterans who have courageously served our country are not forgotten and are receiving the care and services they deserve. VA Secretary Eric Shinseki has set a laudable goal of